



The American Health
Quality Association®

June 4, 2001

The Honorable John Dingell
2328 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Dingell:

The American Health Quality Association (AHQA) represents the national network of Medicare Peer Review Organizations (PROs). The PROs are required by federal statute to be independent, confidential, physician-led organizations with medical and statistical expertise. Having this expertise, they also work in many areas outside of Medicare. One of those areas is performing independent external appeals for private non-ERISA health plans and employers in many states across the nation.

On behalf of the PROs, we write in support of the independent external appeals procedures as they are drafted in Section 104 of the Ganske/Dingell bill (H.R. 526). It has been reported that the Senate version of this bill (S. 283) is likely to be considered by the Senate in the near future. We support this effort and urge you to support its subsequent passage in the House of Representatives.

Throughout this debate, AHQA has maintained that a strong independent external appeals process is the centerpiece of any worthwhile patients' rights legislation. Appeals should be performed by practicing physicians, must be handled quickly, and must be subject to expedited timeframes should the health of a patient be deteriorating. We believe Section 104 meets these criteria.

The PROs have great expertise in this area and under Section 104 they can become independent review entities in every state of the nation. This should help to assure the American public that experienced, state-based reviewers stand ready to hit the ground running from the moment the new law is implemented.

The PRO in your state that can become an independent external review entity is:

Michigan Peer Review Organization
40600 Ann Arbor Road
Suite 200

Phone Number: (734) 459-0900
Fax Number: (734) 454-7295

Plymouth, MI 48170-4495

Thank you for your consideration of our position. If you have any questions, or would like additional information, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Sylvia Gaudette
Director of Government Affairs
The American Health Quality Association